

**MINUTES OF THE
ROCK ISLAND BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**

Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m.

March 12, 2014

ATTENDANCE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
(x) Kevin Day		<input type="checkbox"/> Karen Williams
(x) Dave McAdam		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Tschappat
(x) Gary Snyder		<input type="checkbox"/> Robert Wild
(x) Faye Jalloh		

Staff Present: Alan Fries and Brandy Howe

Chairman Snyder called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – Mr. Tschappat made the motion to approve the Minutes of the February 12, 2014 meeting. Mr. Day seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Procedural Explanation – Chairman Snyder explained the procedure to be followed for the public hearing.

Public Hearing #2014-05 - Request from Peggy Crawford (Jackson Square) for a variance to allow four portable signs in a PUD (planned unit development) district at 2411 4th Avenue.

Mr. Fries presented the staff report. He explained that the sign ordinance prohibits portable signs (Section 11 A 5). The applicant proposes to erect four unlighted freestanding portable “flag” signs (2’ x 16’) in the south front yard.

The apartment development has 30 total units and there are approximately five units vacant and available for lease. The applicant desires the four portable “flag” type signs to advertise they are “now leasing” apartments. The applicant is asking to locate the four signs along the south landscaped area adjacent to 4th Avenue. The applicant has not given a time-frame to have the portable signs displayed, but obviously hopes to lease the apartments as quickly as possible.

Portable signs are defined in the Sign Ordinance as “any sign designed...to be self-supporting, self-contained, portable, and not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure...” They are popular with businesses and other uses because of their low cost and high visibility. Many sign ordinances regulate these types of signs because they can be easily damaged by weather conditions and can blow into other properties or public-right-of-way. The proliferation of portable signs also can add to the visual clutter of commercial properties and corridors as businesses tend to add more and more portable signs to compete with other businesses.

The property is located in the Riverfront Corridor Overlay District. This area is identified to “establish a physically attractive pattern of development for the general welfare of the City” according to the Zoning Ordinance. Ordinance regulations allow only one permanent freestanding sign per parcel to help provide an attractive site design for this important gateway area of the City near the Government Bridge (there is a monument type freestanding sign on the property adjacent to the parking lot). Staff believes that the proposed portable signs do not add to the physical attractiveness of this mixed use area and that allowing variances will alter the design and character of this gateway and corridor.

Planning Staff is recommending denial of the request. If the Board were to disregard Planning Staff's recommendation to deny the use of such signs, as it has done in the past, the Board should at least consider placement of the following three conditions on their approval:

1. Reduce the number of signs requested. It would seem that one such sign would get the message across to the travelling public.
2. Placement of a time limit for the display of such signs. Thirty (30) to sixty (60) days would be reasonable to attract potential leasing tenants, since the applicant has not indicated an average amount of time units are vacant and/or how long it takes to lease a vacant unit.
3. Grant an approval for a period of twelve (12) months. At that time, the applicant may again submit a new variance request to the Board of Zoning Appeals. This would also allow the applicant to perhaps modify a new request with more specific data and requirements for her request.

Chairman Snyder called for proponents.

Peggy Crawford, 219 21st Street and manager of Jackson Square, was sworn in. She said that the owner of the property wants to locate up to four portable flag signs to assist in leasing the available dwelling units. She said that they do not want to locate another permanent sign on the property and these types of portable signs are very successful in attracting attention. She said that she would be acceptable to only having one portable sign off of 4th Avenue be approved for up to 60 days because they have received enough applications to fill the units, but is unsure if everyone will qualify.

Mr. Tschappat asked why she would also not want a portable sign to face the Government Bridge approach off of 24th Street.

Mr. McAdam agreed this would be reasonable.

Ms. Crawford replied that it would be a good idea to also have a sign facing 24th Street.

As no one else wished to speak, the public hearing was closed.

Decision Case #2014-5 – Mr. Tschappat made a motion to approve the request to allow three portable flag signs because:

1. The proposed variance will improve the return on the property.
2. The proposed variance will not alter the character of the neighborhood.

*The Board added the following stipulations.

1. The Board reduced the number of approved signs to three. The signs are to be located at the east end and west end of the parking lot facing 4th Avenue and at the southwest corner of the parking lot off of 24th Street (on the northwest corner of the structure).
2. The Board placed a 60 day time limit from date of approval.

Mr. McAdam seconded the motion.

Chairman Snyder said that the motion provides more signage than the applicant tonight indicated what would be acceptable to them.

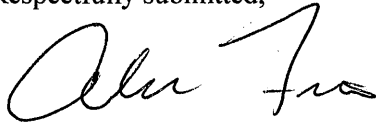
Mr. McAdam said that the owner originally asked for four signs, not Ms. Crawford. He added that the locations are strategic for assisting to lease the property and he wants to support the project to continue to do well.

Mr. Tschappat agreed that if the temporary signs for up to 60 days helps the property he is in support of the motion.

Chairman Snyder called for a vote on the motion to approve three signs with the stipulation of 60 days at the identified locations, and it passed unanimously.

Chairman Snyder adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Fries". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping tail.

Alan Fries, Acting Secretary
Rock Island Board of Zoning Appeals